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THE

# Old and New Testament Student

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VOL. XIII.

OCTOBER, 1891.

No. 4.

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HISTORICAL study of the Bible is not seldom wounded in the house of its friends by those "critics" who see Scripture history, life and thought in a mirror of their preconceived theories. They are slaves of a particular hypothesis of historical development to which they would fain constrain every fact, however wayward and irreconcilable, to submit. A kind of fatalism rules their conceptions. So anxious are they to find harmony and order in historical development that they reduce history to a machine, the facts of biblical life practically existing for their theories instead of moulding and vitalizing them. This is worse treatment than subjecting the Bible to mystical or unhistorical interpretations. The latter honors the facts after a fashion; the former dishonors them while it professes to exalt them. Such an intellectual attitude and activity results in the worst kind of dogmatism—ininitely worse than the dogmatism of the professed theologian by as much as it has already divested itself of the pretence of piety and claims to be actuated by cool scientific motive. The theologian at least acknowledges his duty to be spiritually minded. The pseudo-scientific theorizing "critic" boasts the glory of utter disinterestedness. His only interest, indeed, his only object of worship, is the theory whose success he is pledged to defend. Such men bring discredit upon historical investigation and their work is bound to react to the injury of all serious and devout inquiry into the historical basis of Scripture.

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It is often laid down as a principle of biblical investigation that the presence and work of a great prophet is the outcome

of a deep religious movement in the national life. Such a man as Isaiah or Jeremiah stands as the center and soul of a profound religious reformation of Israel. In them the religious aspirations and purposes of the time found expression and were carried forward to fruition. There is a real truth in this statement—a truth which men are just beginning to apprehend. Already in secular history it is recognized to be a fruitful principle, as illustrated, for example, in the careers of such men as Cromwell, Savonarola, Luther, Loyola. They were men who incarnated tendencies of thought and action which were moving among men of their times. But only recently have we begun to allow that Bible men were men of their time, expressions of the national and religious energies that stirred the age in which they lived. Much light and new meaning has been called forth by the application of this principle to Scriptural history.

But there are limits to such a principle. When set to explain everything it leads into extravagance and error. Applied without discrimination it reduces the individual to impotence and denies the obvious facts of human freedom and divine superhuman activity. The work of Israel's great prophets was their own work as well as the issue of a national movement. Not seldom they stood alone, and, by the power of divine might, brought men up to their standpoint or lived and worked a solitary and unappreciated force in the midst of those whose sympathies and activities were all in the other direction. We cannot always argue from a prophet's activity the existence of national aspiration along the prophet's line of thinking. If we knew the facts, we would find, in many more cases than now exist, that a brilliant course of prophetic energy has fallen in a period in which there is little moral or mental elevation among the people at large. God, by thus using His servants, may purpose to exhibit His own superhuman power to irradiate the surrounding darkness, or, by the raising up of men of mighty spiritual activity, to prepare the coming age or even distant ages to enjoy a blessing which the present is unworthy to receive. The Bible exhibits instances of this, in which cases it is vain to imagine or postulate historical situations

corresponding to the man who there represents God and delivers His message.

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AUTOBIOGRAPHY is rightly regarded as one of the most interesting as well as one of the most genuine and trustworthy sources of knowledge concerning a man and the experiences through which he has passed. A man's own impression of his career, his self-portraiture is always valuable. Such material is more important in the proportion in which it is unconscious and unpremeditated, gathered from hints, suggestions, stray confessions, scattered up and down his own writings upon themes totally apart from personal life. A brilliant achievement in the way of securing a man's portrait thus painted by himself is Dr. Matheson's essay entitled, "Spiritual Development of St. Paul," in which, by a careful study and grouping of various statements in the epistles, he lifts the veil from periods of the Apostle's life which have hitherto been most obscure, and obtains a consistent and orderly outline of the progress of his religious thought and experience. Has it ever occurred to biblical students that the Gospels are rich in these autobiographical details of our Lord's earthly life? There is a fascinating work and a fruitful harvest awaiting the one who will study through the Gospels with this question in mind—What elements are there in these writings which have come from the Master's own lips? It will be at once recognized that these materials are of two classes, (1) those direct and personal declarations concerning Himself, His origin, His mission and His future of which the Fourth Gospel has preserved the largest number, and (2) those narratives of His experiences, which, so far as we can now discover, He must have Himself given to the disciples. Of the latter class the most manifest example is the story of the Temptation, that experience in which no human eye observed Him, and the recollection of which abode with Him alone, until He revealed it to His followers. Moreover, on careful examination much more of this kind of material will be found to be preserved by the evangelists. What an unexplored region for some adventurous student—

the autobiographical elements in the Gospels! What delight and yet what awe and reverence such a study would evoke. It could be made useful also as a chapter in Christian Evidence, since, as cannot be doubted, the essential unity of the self-manifestation of Jesus in the three first Gospels and in the Fourth would be revealed from the lips of the Master Himself.

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IF we are asked to give the underlying subject of all Scripture our answer is "Sin and Grace." The Bible is more than a treatise on ethics. Its interpreters then must be more than men of ethical experience. If they are not, then they have failed to apprehend the underlying realities of the Scripture. The Bible also cannot be to them either a supreme norm or source of life. It stands merely as a compendium of moral precepts colored by Hebrew religious thought. There is a drift among some in this direction.

The Bible is ethical because ethics are a necessary part of religion. But the Bible is first and last *religious*. As Professor Delitzsch says in his latest book, "All recognition of the truth is of a religious character, so far as God himself is the truth and the endless background of the recognition of all religious truth. Biblical questions, however, are immediately religious." The problem of the Bible is that of Sin. Sin also is there regarded not as the violation of human rights, but as the transgression of divine law. The Bible seeks not primarily to place men at peace with each other but with God. A realizing recognition of this through personal experience is demanded of its interpreters. A soul may be as blinded to religious truth as the eye to color. It is scientific to demand a perfect organ of apprehension in exegesis as well as in art.

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PROGRESS through obstruction seems to be the normal condition of the science of Biblical Criticism and, indeed, of religious thought as a whole. Ideally this situation seems abnormal and lamentable. In theory we are all glad of more light, clearer views, better knowledge. But let any man

step forward with his contribution to this desirable object and he must make his gift to reluctant recipients amid a cross-fire of criticism and objection, out of which his offering is likely to emerge with diminished glory and he himself escapes with sometimes scarce a rag of orthodoxy to hide his theological nakedness. And all the while he thought he was going to be hailed as a servant of truth, a herald of good tidings. Surely "the way of the" theological innovator and the progressive student and investigator, like that of the (other) "transgressor," "is hard." There is no royal road in Biblical Science to a seat of peace where a man may offer his results to an admiring world of the faithful. From the days of Stephen, whose brilliant but innovating Old Testament exegesis drew a fire of stones, down to the present days, variously warm (or cold) has been the reception of the "new" theologian and interpreter.

Now, strange as the statement may seem, it is a fact that no friend of truth or believer in God, when he really comes to think about the matter, would wish to have this state of things otherwise. He remembers how many fine theories have not been able to stand the test of open fire. He recognizes how easy it is for the single worker in the great field of learning to measure that field by his own horizon, and to mistake for pure and unmitigated truth what is a sad admixture of truth and error, the latter by far the more abundant. Enthusiasm for his pet view may lead the thinker into extravagant and untrue expressions and to an underestimation of other equally true and important elements of the problem. Even what is in itself both important and hitherto unrecognized in biblical learning may be so imperfectly put forth as to be an injury instead of a help to the faithful. The point may not be reached in the process of investigation where the facts can be presented in their completeness, but false and crude elements be used in the argument for what is in its essence real and a decided step in advance. It is here that the important though unconscious service appears which even dogged and obstreperous conservatism renders to the progress of sound biblical learning. Truth cannot be permanently destroyed by obstruction or its advance long

checked. But, as it passes through the fires of opposition and rejection, some very desirable results are achieved on its behalf. The new truth must separate itself from extravagant expression. False accretions must be removed. What is unreal must disappear. As assaults are made on this side or on that, facts which were overlooked or put into the background are brought forward, while those which were made too prominent drop out, and the thing begins on the battle field to take the form of real and essential truth, capable of resisting all attack, ready to move forward and sweep the ground clear of all opposers. Blessed be obstruction! For human nature and the human mind being what they are, the safest, the most permanent, the best progress in the knowledge of God's truth is made through the fiercest opposition of, doubtless, well-meaning but obstructive conservatism. The proclaimer of strange doctrines usually gets about what he deserves in the way of hard knocks. But what cares he? He knows that he has seen something that is real, and if it be through conflict and loss of much that he thought was essential, still that real thing shall come forth unharmed, nay rather, better fitted to take its place in God's universe of enduring reality.

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THE humblest, homeliest, parts of the Bible are full of instruction. The best that can be said of most books is that here and there they rise to points and passages of inspiration and power. They are like deserts with here and there an oasis—more sand and shale than green and garden. But surely nothing is hazarded in the assertion that while the Bible also strikes sublime heights and has its mountain peaks bathed in heaven's purest glow, yet even its valleys and its plains yield richer fruit than the finest gardens of other literatures. Even the personal allusions, the bits of tender human feeling, the simple experiences of its writers, have that unearthly power and point, that divine reasonableness, which teach and help where teaching and help seem least intended. It is the great lesson-book of the soul, and we learn as much from its spirit and tone as from its definite

direct laws and doctrines. The lives of Moses and David and Jeremiah are almost as valuable to us as the commandments and ritual of the one or the psalms and prophecies of the others. Surely Daniel's career has encouraged and inspired saints as much as his predictions. The solemn significance of the facts that Jesus often went apart in prayer and that it was His custom to enter the Synagogue on the Sabbath, lends immense weight to the clear commands to pray and to hallow the Sabbath day. Thus in a thousand ways the two sayings are justified, "Every scripture . . . is profitable," and "Thy word is a light."